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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 KUWAIT 002641

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SUBJECT: PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM PREPARATIONS IN
KARBALA, AL HILLAH, AND MOSUL

REF: KUWAIT 02416

SUMMARY

1. Coalition forces vacated the silo in Karbala and the warehouse in Al Hillah to make way for food arrivals, but continue to provide security to both structures. UXO has been discovered in the Karbala MOT warehouse. Large quantities of food have begun to arrive in Al Hillah for the Babil Governorate. Ninawa Governorate has been asked to prepare for the arrival of 5,000 MT of wheat grain per day, but the shortage of adequate silo space in Ninawa could be a problem. The DART briefed Coalition forces in Kuwait on the magnitude and needs of the PDS. End Summary.

FOOD STORAGE IN KARBALA

2. The DART met with staff of the U.N. World Food Program (WFP), Ministry of Trade (MOT) silo manager, and Coalition forces based in Karbala on 19 May. The DART discussed the upcoming public distribution system (PDS) and explained WFP's role, observed initial WFP rice deliveries, and confirmed wheat grain stocks in the Karbala grain silo.

3. The DART also confirmed that Coalition forces have vacated the grain silo in Karbala. The MOT silo manager claims that Coalition forces removed property from the silo grounds and has presented an inventory of missing items to battalion headquarters. The DART discussed this issue with a Coalition officer who stated that he would follow up to determine a course of action. Among the items on the MOT list are two tractor-trailer cabs, tools, several computers, office furniture, and cash from the office safe. The DART confirmed that all MOT staff in Karbala received USD 20 emergency payments and is in contact with MOT Baghdad.

4. The DART inquired about the possibility of security assistance, and the Coalition officer agreed that frequent patrols and visible presence by Coalition forces in the area of the silo and warehouses could be established. At the same time, the Karbala Protective Force has been deemed antagonistic to rehabilitation efforts and will be disbanded by Coalition forces.

5. WFP's ten-person national staff is established and operational at the MOT warehouse. They relayed to the DART that any public information messages should be focused on instructions to food agents and should include precise dates for ration distributions, actual quantities of each commodity in the ration, as well as the ration basket contents. This was the pre-war practice, and beneficiaries will be expecting this information as a normal function of PDS.

6. WFP and the DART discovered unexploded ordnance (UXO) in one area of the MOT warehouse complex. The DART requested and received an initial UXO assessment by Coalition forces that confirmed UXO contamination. A request for UXO removal and a general mine sweep of the warehouse area was submitted to the Coalition and an operation was approved and set for 18 May.

MOVING COALITION FORCES FROM THE AL HILLAH WAREHOUSE

7. After receiving reports from WFP staff that had recently visited Al Hillah and found that Coalition forces were occupying the MOT warehouse and tightly controlling WFP

truck access to the warehouse (allowing only two trucks to unload at a time), the DART visited the warehouse on 17 May.

18. The DART met with representatives of the Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) in Al Hillah, as well as a Coalition Commander at the MOT warehouse, to find a resolution to the problems. After some discussion, the Coalition forces agreed to vacate the warehouse the following day (18 May). The Coalition forces expressed concern about the safety of the command post located behind the warehouse complex and adjacent to the perimeter wall. The Coalition forces proposed to build a barrier wall on the warehouse side that would protect the perimeter wall. The fact that trucks would constantly need to enter and leave the warehouse facility remained a concern, but the Coalition forces agreed to work with WFP to arrive at a solution that would increase the turn-around time of the trucks. In addition to the WFP trucks that are delivering commodities to the MOT warehouse, food agent trucks are collecting rations for the September and October distribution as directed by MOT.

19. On 19 May, the DART confirmed that the Coalition forces had vacated the MOT warehouse. It remains, however, under the security blanket of the Coalition command that provides security at the front entrance to the warehouse compound with a ground team and a two-man machine gun nest on the roof of the MOT office building.

10. WFP stated that the MOT would eventually be responsible for providing warehouse compound security. But until that time, the Coalition forces would continue to secure the front gate and inspect incoming vehicles. On May 20 in Al Hillah, DART met with the Coalition Military Police who agreed to include MOT security guards in the upcoming Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) police security training. In addition to the warehouse, MOT security will also be needed at the Al Hillah grain silo facilities.

FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS IN AL HILLAH

11. The MOT reports that September distributions began prior to the war and are being completed this month. According to WFP staff, current distributions include flour, rice, sugar, vegetable oil, white beans, detergent, soap, tea, salt, and infant formula. The ration is missing powdered milk and weaning cereal and is low in vegetable oil stocks. (Note: Much of the country is currently finishing August distributions. End Note.) WFP stated that even though Al Hillah has abundant amounts of flour in the market, most Iraqis are unable to afford this commodity at current prices.

12. The MOT's decision to proceed with the September distribution and October distributions was taken prior to WFP arrival in Al Hillah. WFP international staff first visited Al Hillah on 13 May, as it was one of the last towns to be approved by the U.N. Security Coordinator in the south. WFP is now hoping to halt an October distribution and focus on preparations for the first countrywide distribution that it and the MOT wants to begin in June.

13. WFP reported on 20 May that it had received 994 metric tons (MT) of rice and 97 MT of wheat flour at the Al Hillah silos. Trucks from Jordan will now be arriving in Al Hillah on a daily basis. In addition, the Taji silo in Baghdad experienced mechanical failure on 21 May. As a result, the trucks carrying wheat grain that were to discharge into the Taji silo have been diverted to Al Hillah.

14. Although Coalition forces are now willing to allow more than two trucks into the warehouse at one time, MOT warehouse staff stated that they did not have the warehouse personnel to process more than two trucks at a time. Approximately 30 food agent trucks per day are receiving commodities from the compound. Trucks normally arrive at the compound throughout the morning and continue arriving until about 1400 hours. WFP will address the MOT staffing issue at the warehouse, as the Marines were also limiting the number of total staff at the warehouse to 20. WFP is cleaning and making minor repair to the warehouse structures to accommodate the significant quantities of food that are arriving for the June distribution.

15. DART met with WFP national staff in the designated WFP office space at the MOT compound. Neither the WFP space nor the MOT office space are in acceptable condition and both offices are in need of clean up, refurbishment, office furniture, computers and supplies. WFP is bringing in containers to serve as offices.

SILO CAPACITY IN MOSUL

¶16. On 18 May, the DART traveled to Mosul with WFP to meet with the Manager of the Ninawa MOT Grain Board. WFP explained that it would soon be sending 136,000 MT of bulk wheat to Mosul (from stocks currently in Syria), hoping to move 5,000 MT per day. WFP requested MOT assistance in locating storage for these commodities.

¶17. The MOT confirmed that the silos could accept large quantities beginning in early June, while WFP expressed the hope that it could begin delivering to Mosul within one week. The MOT manager stated that he would meet the next day with all the silo managers to ensure that any necessary preparations could be achieved quickly.

¶18. Contrary to much more optimistic information WFP had received earlier from the MOT, on 18 May the MOT noted that a number of silos were not functional and others had been damaged by looters after the war. Current daily offloading capacity and silo capacity are as follows, according to the updated information from the MOT:

Town	Offloading	Current storage capacity
Talafar:	1,000 MT/day	50,000 MT available
Ba'aj:	1,000 MT/day	50,000 MT available
Mosul:	500 MT/day	14,000 MT available
Shurkat:	1,500 MT/day	50,000 MT available

¶19. While the offloading totals only 4,000 MT per day capacity, the Mosul silo could possibly accept up to 1,500 MT per day (instead of 500 MT per day) if milling were done concurrently. All storage figures are for silo complexes; MOT said that open bins were not available since these would be used to store the upcoming harvest.

¶20. In addition to these four silos, there remain two other possibilities:

¶A. Makhmour silo, as reported in ref tel, has a large storage capacity but needs some minor repairs. The main issue is that it lies in a contested area: technically part of Arbil Governorate, but until a few weeks ago, under Ninawa Governorate's control. As stated in ref tel from DART's 15 May visit to Makhmour, WFP will not be utilizing this silo until the political issues have been resolved.

¶B. Shekhan silo could accept 1,000 MT per day, with approximately 30,000 to 40,000 MT capacity available, and is located about 55 km north of Mosul towards Dahuk. The MOT stated that the Shekhan silo is not in a contested territory, as it is clearly in the Ninawa Governorate. However, as Niawa is a Kurdish area, the Kurdish Democratic Party has taken over the silo. DART and WFP staff contacted Mosul Civil Affairs personnel, who promised to send a team to Shekhan silo the next day and report back to WFP on 22 May.

¶21. Consequently, until the problems outlined above are resolved, WFP is looking at a maximum capacity of 4,000 MT per day, if the silos are operating as well as the MOT estimates. The through-put could possibly rise for the Mosul silo if milling were done at the same time that new tonnage is arriving, and would certainly rise if the Shekhan silo could be utilized. Due to security restrictions outside Mosul, however, WFP international staff cannot access the other silos to confirm total and daily offload capacities. The DART will attempt to confirm some of the data that was presented by the MOT.

BRIEFING THE COALITION ON PDS REQUIREMENTS

¶22. On 18 May, the DART briefed Coalition forces in Kuwait on the history of the PDS, its importance, current plans, and roles of the WFP and MOT.

¶23. The DART was surprised to discover that the commander had the understanding that his troops were instructed not to work with the U.N. agencies. The DART not only confirmed that cooperating with the U.N. would be helpful, but encouraged it.

¶24. To facilitate communication, the DART asked the Coalition forces to appoint a point of contact (POC) in each Governorate that would serve as the liaison to WFP national and international staff, as well as the MOT. The CMOs, Civil Military Information Centers, and Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Centers are helpful, but one point of contact for PDS issues in each Governorate would be extremely helpful to immediately address issues as they arise.

¶25. Coalition forces also requested assistance in locating and securing additional warehouses and silos. The DART explained the magnitude of food tonnages that are entering the country, and that storage is critical, so that trucks can unload quickly to decrease the turn-around time.

(Comment: Coalition forces have already begun follow-up actions and seem quite sincere in wanting to help. End Comment.)

JONES